

ON THE MARQUEE



KEELY WYGONIK

Actress has 'curious' role in children's play

If you're curious about whatever happened to Roberta Willison, daughter of David and Mildred W. of Bloomfield Hills who moved to New York to pursue an acting career, you'll find out Nov. 6. Willison stars as Marie, the girlfriend of the "man in the yellow hat" in a musical version of the beloved children's tale, "Curious George," 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 6 and 2 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 7 at Youtheatre at the Music Hall Center, 350 Madison Avenue, Detroit.

For ticket information, call 963-2366. Tickets go on sale the day of the performance, one hour before curtain time.

Willison has been on tour with the Theaterworks/USA production since Oct. 6, and just rolled into town from Alabama when we talked on the phone. "Curious George" fans won't recognize Marie as she was written into the show. "She's a very talented composer," said Willison. "This is the very first tour of Curious George. It's a very playful show. George is a gymnast, he does a lot of tumbling and walking on his hands. I think everybody is attracted to the curiosity George mania."

It's also a very good story about family reconciliation. There's a scene where George runs away from home, and anger is expressed. Then there's forgiveness at the end of the play when the family comes together again, and this reaches the children strongly.

Cranbrook Music Guild continues its season 8 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 9 in the library of Cranbrook House with a recital by pianist Leszek Bartkiewicz. A native of Poland, Bartkiewicz is now based in the metropolitan Detroit area. A gold medalist in the 1990 Lugano International Master Players Competition, Bartkiewicz was a winner, in his mid-teens, of the 1978 Young Polish Pianist Prize and was the youngest faculty member of the Polish National Music Conservatory. He is active as a teacher and presenter of master classes and made his Orchestra Hall debut in 1987.



Leszek Bartkiewicz

For his Cranbrook Music Guild recital, he has chosen a program which includes Haydn's "E-flat Major Sonata," Chopin's "Barcarolle," and Musorgski's "Pictures at an Exhibition," in its original, piano version.

See MARQUEE, 1C

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Entertainment next week:

Find out what the dogs are saying when movie critic John Managhan reviews "Look Who's Talking Now," a romantic family comedy.

Birmingham Theatre presents Noll Simon's "Jake's Women."

Series features world-class talent

Musica Viva International Concert Series begins its fifth season Nov. 14 with the legendary Juan Serrano, "King of the Flamenco guitar," and guests.



Enjoy the sounds of Spain without leaving home Nov. 14 when Musica Viva International Concert Series presents a concert featuring Juan Serrano, "King of the Flamenco guitar" with guest artists Isabel Ruiz de Villa "La Chamaela" dancer, and singer Marija Temo at Orchestra Hall in Detroit.

"Juan Serrano is back by popular demand," said series artistic director Ginka Gerova-Ortega of Bloomfield Hills. "He's made over 20 recordings and plays to sold-out audiences worldwide."

Joining him will be Spain's leading Flamenco Dancer, Isabel Ruiz de Villa and singer, guitarist Marija Temo. Flamenco is the oldest and most authentic art form of dancing and singing in Spain. It is a mosaic of Greek, Hindu, Hebrew, Arabic, Pagan and Oriental cultures.

Meet the performers after the concert during a dinner reception at the Townsend Hotel, 100 Townsend Street in Birmingham. Tickets include prime seating at the concert, and dinner. Prices per person are — \$80 supporter; \$100 patron; and \$150 benefactor. All proceeds will benefit the Musica Viva concert series. Make checks payable to Musica Viva and send to Musica Viva, 4955 Malibu Drive, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48302.

As the concert series begins its fifth year, Gerova-Ortega said it wouldn't be possible without the support and dedication of many volunteers and friends of Musica Viva.



JOHN STORMZAND/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Artistic director: Ginka Gerova-Ortega is a world-renowned flutist and artistic director of the Musica Viva International Concert Series.

PREVIEW

"Many people make it happen," she said. "Musica Viva" means "music alive" and is a concept based on the fusion of tradition and innovation. We set the stage for an international exchange that gives talented Michigan performers an opportunity to perform, while bringing in tremendous talent from all over the world.

Here is a list of upcoming concerts. The host for most of the concerts is the Smith Theater for the

Performing Arts at Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills. For more information, call 932-0400 or 626-4626.

Feb. 18 — Peterson String Quartet of Berlin, Europe's top string quartet on its first American tour.

March 25 — "Tango Classics" with Brazilian pianists Luiz do Mora Castro and guest dancers.

April 22 — "Camarata Musica Viva Chamber Orchestra."

May 22 — "Second annual Michigan Flute Festival" featuring over 400 flutists from around the world at Orchestra Hall in Detroit.

IN CONCERT

Juan Serrano with Isabel Ruiz de Villa "La Chamaela" Spanish dancer, Marija Temo, singer.

Presented by Musica Viva International Concert Series at Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward, Detroit.

Concert time: 3:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 14.

Tickets: Range from \$10 to \$30, call 833-3700.

Local performers shine in comic opera



MARY JANE DOERR

David DiChiera did not have to travel far to find "acres of diamonds" for Michigan Opera Theatre's season opener at the Fisher Theatre in Detroit.

Locally, the general director found a superb cast who certainly are not "diamonds in the rough," and mounted an hilarious "Barber of Seville."

Southfield's Ara Berberian was home for the first time this fall, after 16 consecutive seasons at the Metropolitan Opera, to take on the role of the slimy, bribe-taking music teacher, Don Basilio and sing a pulsating, explosive "La calunnia." Berberian performs with natural ease and he looks like a scoundrel.

REVIEW

In the pit, Oakland University faculty member Suzanne Acton made her debut as an operatic conductor. She has always shown a keen ability to transfer her musical knowledge to the MOT chorus over the last 13 years. In the pit, her timing suited the singers.

Acton had her arms and hands full with this show. In the two casts, the leads all had different cadenzas and tempos. For the talented soprano Janet Williams to sing Rosina, a mezzo-soprano role, the key had to be transposed. (Also Williams took some unusual cadenzas.)

Another local talent Clertitha Buggs sang a seditious "Il vecchiotto cerca moglie." Years ago, Community Programs Director Karen Vanderkloot

ON STAGE

"BARBER OF SEVILLE"

Theater: Michigan Opera Theatre season opener at the Fisher Theatre in Detroit.

Curtain time: 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Nov. 5-6. Performances are in Italian with English surtitles above the stage.

Tickets: Call MOT Box Office, 874-SING (7464) or TicketMaster, 645-6666.

In the maze of Detroit's cultural jewels, MOT is a shiny gem with fewer karats but with the jeweler's expertise to distinguish the diamonds.

In the maze of Detroit's cultural jewels, MOT is a shiny gem with fewer karats but with the jeweler's expertise to distinguish the diamonds. The company launched Kathleen Battle's career with this Rosina role. Janet Williams will follow her footsteps.

Mary Jane Doerr of Troy is a full-time teacher and freelance writer who specializes in opera and musical theater.

Fine acting, but 'Black Coffee' lacks atmosphere



HUGH GALLAGHER

Atmosphere is everything in Agatha Christie mysteries. The quiet English villages of Miss Jane Marple or the exotic Orient Express or Nile barge of the traveling aristocracy are ripe locations for Dame Agatha's satiric observations on class-conscious British life.

The Meadow Brook Theatre production of the 1931 "Black Coffee" never quite takes us to the library of a rich, eccentric English scientist. It has some fine acting, a properly cascading final act and a pleasant set, but it lacks that crucial atmosphere.

Christie's famous detective with "the little gray cells," Hercule Poirot, is called to a country estate to investigate the theft of scientific papers on building an atomic bomb.

Before Poirot and his faithful companion Capt. Hastings arrive, the scientist dies. Has he been poisoned? If so, who did the deed? Was it his playboy son, his mys-

REVIEW

serious daughter-in-law, his irrequiet niece, his talkative sister, his meticulous secretary, the butler or the Italian doctor.

As always the number of likely suspects is large enough and credible enough to keep the audience guessing and Dame Agatha follows the example of Hercule Poirot by having Hastings stand in for the rest of us while Poirot soars ahead.

The first, necessarily expository act dragged as the actors seemed to struggle to get into character. The second and third acts moved with more authority.

Eric Tavares goes lightly on the Brighton accent and a bit too heavily on the hesitant Poirot mannerisms. He succeeds in making Poirot a trustworthy confidante and does show the process of the mind at work.

James Anthony is excellent as the eager if bumbling Hastings. His futile attempts to out-think his famous friend are the liveliest exchanges in the play.

Mary Benson garners laughter

ON STAGE

"BLACK COFFEE"

Theater: Meadow Brook Theatre, on the campus of Oakland University, Rochester.

Curtain time: 8 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 4, and Friday, Nov. 5; 6 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 6; 8:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 7; 8 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 9; 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 10. Show continues through Nov. 21, call theater for additional times.

Prices: Tickets: Range from \$18 to \$24.50. Student, senior, and group discounts available. Call 377-3300, or Ticketmaster, 645-6666, Group Sales, 370-3316.

as the verbose and twittering maiden sister. Her off-putting, unthinking production captures the essence of a certain kind of British bigot.

Paul Hopper is properly nasty as the auspicious Italian with a great clipped Italian accent. Joseph Reed brings needed energy and honesty to the final act as the lovably incompetent Inspector Japp.

The play is not one of the better

'As always the number of likely suspects is large enough and credible enough to keep the audience guessing.'

Christie mysteries having neither the atmosphere of "The Mousetrap" or the intellectual twists of "Witness for the Prosecution." It is notable, however, for two things. It makes some interesting observations on British bigotry. It also deals with the atomic bomb many years before the bomb was perfected, when it was only the subject of so-called juvenile science fiction. Dame Agatha also took a strong anti-bomb position years before the Ban-the-Bomb committee became a fixture of British politics.

Hugh Gallagher is production editor of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc. He has reviewed films and plays for the past 20 years.

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